

# FOREWORD



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In the next century, the spread of information, the development of and access to new technologies, and an increasing recognition of global problems will present vast opportunities for economic growth, regional integration, and global political cooperation. Yet for all of this promise, the world remains a complex, dynamic, and dangerous place. It will continue to be an uncertain security environment, one for which U.S. special operations forces (SOF) are uniquely suited, offering the capabilities to avert emerging threats and providing unprecedented opportunities to address the challenges in ways that advance U.S. interests.

Our national military strategy challenges us to “shape the international environment and respond to crises while preparing now for an uncertain future.” No small feat, but SOF are doing that right now. In 1999, SOF conducted engagement operations in over one hundred countries. When crisis response scenarios developed, SOF were already on the ground in many of those situations. SOF were shaping the environment by their presence, providing regionally and culturally trained forces to facilitate the theater commander’s response. Unique SOF abilities give our National Command Authorities expanded options, tailored to task, that are not available elsewhere.

Some of America’s most dedicated men and women are at the core of these unique capabilities. They are mature officers and enlisted personnel, drawn from the military services, trained in the special skills unique to their mission, and then seasoned with real-world operations. We must continue to focus on selecting the right people and training them for the demanding tasks that SOF perform.

In addition, as we prepare for an uncertain future, we must continue a robust modernization program, leveraging technology, to enhance the human dimension. We express the concept simply as “equipping the man, not manning the equipment.” Merging technology with the human dimension will improve the SOF warrior’s survivability, lethality, mobility, and ability to access and use all relevant information sources.

We look forward to meeting the security challenges of this new century as we work to ensure that America’s SOF remain the most carefully selected, most fully prepared, and best-equipped and trained special operations fighting force in the world. Our country deserves no less.